

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1           1.       A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:  
2                   presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;  
3                   presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not  
4 expired;  
5                   deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to at  
6 least one randomly-selected expiration parameter; and  
7                   repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and  
8 deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of  
9 the active display segments have been deactivated.
- 1           2.       The method of Claim 1, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter  
2 comprises an expiration count.
- 1           3.       The method of Claim 2, wherein the randomly-selected expiration count  
2 comprises a plurality of expiration counts, and wherein deactivating the active display  
3 segments comprises deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to  
4 one of the plurality of expiration counts.
- 1           4.       The method of Claim 3, wherein the plurality of expiration counts comprises a  
2 unique expiration count for each of the active display segments, and wherein deactivating the  
3 active display segments comprises deactivating the active display segments that have expired  
4 in response to their corresponding one of the unique expiration counts.
- 1           5.       The method of Claim 2, wherein a quantity of the expiration count is at least  
2 partly influenced by a wager input.
- 1           6.       The method of Claim 2, further comprising randomly selecting award amounts  
2 from a table of alternative award amounts.

1           7.       The method of Claim 6, wherein randomly selecting award amounts comprises  
2 selecting a number of award amounts corresponding to the expiration count.

1           8.       The method of Claim 1, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter  
2 comprises an expiration time duration.

1           9.       The method of Claim 8, wherein a quantity of the expiration time duration is  
2 at least partly influenced by a wager input.

1           10.      The method of Claim 1, further comprising revealing the randomly-selected  
2 expiration parameter to the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active  
3 display segments.

1           11.      The method of Claim 1, further comprising concealing the randomly-selected  
2 expiration parameter from the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active  
3 display segments.

1           12.      The method of Claim 1, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one  
2 expiration parameter by randomly selecting the expiration parameter from a table of  
3 alternative expiration parameters.

1           13.      The method of Claim 12, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter  
2 comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters with replacement.

1           14.      The method of Claim 12, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter  
2 comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters without replacement.

1           15.      The method of Claim 12, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter  
2 comprises randomly selecting the expiration parameter from separate tables of alternative  
3 expiration parameters for each of the active display segments.

1           16.     The method of Claim 1, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one  
2     expiration parameter using an equal probability distribution for each alternative expiration  
3     parameter option.

1           17.     The method of Claim 1, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one  
2     expiration parameter using a weighted probability distribution for each alternative expiration  
3     parameter option.

1           18.     The method of Claim 1, further comprising identifying the randomly-selected  
2     expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols in the active display segments.

1           19.     The method of Claim 18, wherein identifying the randomly-selected  
2     expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises facilitating participant  
3     selection of the randomly-selected expiration parameter.

1           20.     The method of Claim 19, further comprising facilitating participant  
2     association between particular active display segments and a corresponding randomly-  
3     selected expiration parameter.

1           21.     The method of Claim 18, wherein identifying the randomly-selected  
2     expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises automatically selecting the  
3     randomly-selected expiration parameter without participant intervention.

1           22.     The method of Claim 21, further comprising individually associating a  
2     plurality of randomly-selected expiration parameters with a plurality of the active display  
3     segments.

1           23.     The method of Claim 21, further comprising associating one randomly-  
2     selected expiration parameter with a plurality of the active display segments.

1           24.     The method of Claim 1, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter  
2     is a randomly-selected expiration decision performed each time that the symbols are to be  
3     presented in each of the active display segments.

1           25.     The method of Claim 1, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter  
2     comprises an expiration count and an expiration time duration.

1           26.     The method of Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the  
2     active display segments and deactivating the active display segments that have expired until a  
3     predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated comprises  
4     repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments and deactivating the  
5     active display segments that have expired until all of the active display segments have been  
6     deactivated.

1           27.     A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:  
2                   presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;  
3                   presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not  
4     expired;  
5                   deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to each  
6     of the active display segments' presentation of symbols a number of times corresponding to a  
7     respective expiration count value; and  
8                   repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and  
9     deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until all of the active display  
10    segments have been deactivated.

1           28.     A casino gaming apparatus hosting a gaming activity having at least a standard  
2     mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising:  
3                   a video screen to present a display grid having a plurality of display cells;  
4                   a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode  
5     of operation; and

6                   a processor configured to designate a plurality of the display cells as active  
7 display cells in response to a predetermined symbol combination occurring during the  
8 standard mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation to randomly present  
9 symbols in the active display cells, deactivate the active display cells that presented symbols  
10 a number of times corresponding to a randomly-selected expiration count, and to repeat the  
11 random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the display cells that reached the  
12 randomly-selected expiration count until all of the active display cells have been deactivated.

1           29.    A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:  
2                   presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel  
3 segments;  
4                   presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments that have not expired;  
5                   deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to at least  
6 one randomly-selected expiration parameter; and  
7                   repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and  
8 deactivating the active reel segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the  
9 active reel segments have been deactivated.

1           30.    The method of Claim 29, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter  
2 comprises an expiration count.

1           31.    The method of Claim 30, wherein the randomly-selected expiration count  
2 comprises a plurality of expiration counts, and wherein deactivating the active reel segments  
3 comprises deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to one of the  
4 plurality of expiration counts.

1           32.    The method of Claim 31, wherein the plurality of expiration counts comprises  
2 a unique expiration count for each of the active reel segments, and wherein deactivating the  
3 active reel segments comprises deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in  
4 response to their corresponding one of the unique expiration counts.

1           33.     The method of Claim 30, wherein a quantity of the expiration count is at least  
2 partly influenced by a wager input.

1           34.     The method of Claim 30, further comprising randomly selecting award  
2 amounts from a table of alternative award amounts.

1           35.     The method of Claim 34, wherein randomly selecting award amounts  
2 comprises selecting a number of award amounts corresponding to the expiration count.

1           36.     The method of Claim 29, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter  
2 comprises an expiration time duration.

1           37.     The method of Claim 36, wherein a quantity of the expiration time duration is  
2 at least partly influenced by a wager input.

1           38.     The method of Claim 20, further comprising revealing the randomly-selected  
2 expiration parameter to the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active  
3 reel segments.

1           39.     The method of Claim 29, further comprising concealing the randomly-selected  
2 expiration parameter from the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active  
3 reel segments.

1           40.     The method of Claim 29, further comprising randomly selecting the at least  
2 one expiration parameter by randomly selecting the expiration parameter from a table of  
3 alternative expiration parameters.

1           41.     The method of Claim 40, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter  
2 comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters with replacement.

1           42.     The method of Claim 40, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter  
2 comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters without replacement.

1           43.     The method of Claim 40, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter  
2 comprises randomly selecting the expiration parameter from separate tables of alternative  
3 expiration parameters for each of the active reel segments.

1           44.     The method of Claim 29, further comprising randomly selecting the at least  
2 one expiration parameter using an equal probability distribution for each alternative  
3 expiration parameter option.

1           45.     The method of Claim 29, further comprising randomly selecting the at least  
2 one expiration parameter using a weighted probability distribution for each alternative  
3 expiration parameter option.

1           46.     The method of Claim 29, further comprising identifying the randomly-selected  
2 expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols in the active reel segments.

1           47.     The method of Claim 46, wherein identifying the randomly-selected  
2 expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises facilitating participant  
3 selection of the randomly-selected expiration parameter.

1           48.     The method of Claim 47, further comprising facilitating participant  
2 association between particular active reel segments and a corresponding randomly-selected  
3 expiration parameter.

1           49.     The method of Claim 46, wherein identifying the randomly-selected  
2 expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises automatically selecting the  
3 randomly-selected expiration parameter without participant intervention.

1           50.     The method of Claim 49, further comprising individually associating a  
2 plurality of randomly-selected expiration parameters with a plurality of the active reel  
3 segments.



1           51.     The method of Claim 49, further comprising associating one randomly-  
2     selected expiration parameter with a plurality of the active reel segments.

1           52.     The method of Claim 29, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter  
2     is a randomly-selected expiration decision performed each time that the symbols are to be  
3     presented in each of the active reel segments.

1           53.     The method of Claim 29, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter  
2     comprises an expiration count and an expiration time duration.

1           54.     The method of Claim 29, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols in each of  
2     the active reel segments and deactivating the active reel segments that have expired until a  
3     predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated comprises  
4     repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments and deactivating the active  
5     reel segments that have expired until all of the active reel segments have been deactivated.